

# Under the reign of AI: a new 21st century taste dispute? Reflections about Ian Hamilton Finlay' "Little Sparta" & John Goto "High Summer".

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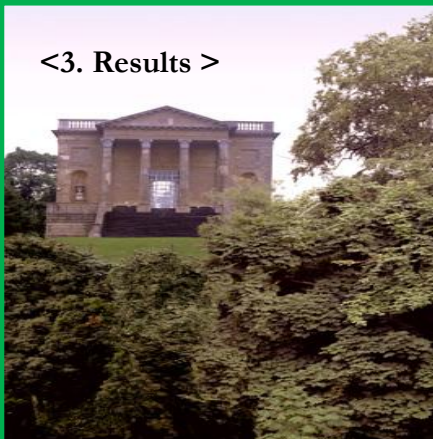
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<1. Introduction> Aesthetic thinking must be challenged regarding the contributions of AI to the production of critical thinking, revisiting historical paradigms. Evoking historical categorical concepts, its repercussions on more recent thinking are reviewed.

- The philosophical and historical aesthetic contents about the Standard/Norm of Taste were crossed, based on an iconographic survey focused on Little Sparta, by Ian Hamilton Finley, and High Summer, by John Goto. The challenge was developed through the use of free AI platforms to generate images that can correspond, in the present day, to new (and plausible) standards of taste.
- How can (or can) images generated by AI be compared, with the aim of identifying similarities and/or differences in comparison to artistic iconographic sets (2 or 3D) created by John Goto and Ian Hamilton Finley? How can the counter-ideas organized/composed by a photographer and/or an artist-poet be visually (re)configured, through AI?

< 2.Methods > The iconographic and ekphrastic research took place in an improvised visual-narrative laboratory, equipped with the minimum conditions to obtain the results that were predicted and were subsequently obtained. Over a period of five months (July-December 2024) a chosen set of High Summer images by John Goto and of Ian H. Finley's Little Sparta photos were converted by me into descriptions, on a recurring basis and, in some cases, on consecutive days. The ongoing process sought to confirm (or not) the intermediate results achieved, using a new testing phase between March and May 2025.

## <3. Results >



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Maria de Fátima Lambert is a Portuguese philosopher specializing in aesthetics and aesthetic education. In her article "Approaches to a definition of aesthetic education and the 'formation of taste'", published in the Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia in 1993, she explores the formation of aesthetic taste, highlighting the importance of aesthetic education in the construction of judgments of taste.

Lambert argues that the "judgment of taste" is reflexive and translates the feeling of an unspecified final form, experienced as a state of harmony of the representative faculties. She emphasizes that aesthetic taste is an exemplary necessity; that is, each "judgment of taste" affirms an example of a universal rule that one would not know how to state conceptually.

In addition, Lambert highlights the importance of aesthetic education in the formation of taste, suggesting that aesthetic sensitivity can be cultivated and improved through education. She proposes that aesthetic education should go beyond the mere appreciation of beauty, involving a critical and reflexive understanding of works of art and aesthetic values.

For Lambert, the formation of taste is not just a matter of personal preference, but involves a process of intellectual and emotional development that allows individuals to appreciate and critically evaluate aesthetic manifestations in different cultural and historical contexts. If you wish to deepen your knowledge of Maria de Fátima Lambert's work, you can access the full article in the Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia or consult other publications by the author available on academic platforms such as PhilPapers.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40337030>

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## <4.Discussion>

In Ian Hamilton Finley's Little Sparta project, the embodied standard of taste can be defined as a fusion of classical refinement, conceptual depth, and politically engaged aesthetics, grounded in a subjective vision of cultural heritage and moral order. Goto appropriates 18th-century landscape painting and historic English gardens, but populates these tranquil scenes with incongruent and often unsettling contemporary elements (e.g., surveillance, protesters, violence, refugees). Taste is challenged as an ideological mask—no longer innocent or purely aesthetic, but complicit in social-georeferenced historical erasure and elite privilege. Do these principles prevail in the AI images generated in my conceptual-visual lab? My stipulated (written) purposes gave rise to AI (visual) productions. To what extent did my personal norm of taste manipulate/shape the prompts and thus their conversion into images. In other words: they resulted from a personal interpretation (my own) versed in the prompts, so that the original artistic images of the authors - mentioned above - were altered, not only by AI, but by my commands. The words chosen for the successive prompts correspond to almost immediate decisions, assuming that a certain "voracity" in the generation of new images was a constant throughout the sessions. Over the course of these months, we sought to assume "control", following a detailed approach to the artists' iconography, searching for (their) implicit theoretical foundations. The act of rejecting a generated image and, purely and simply, for example, not downloading it to the image archive/folder of the day/image to which it referred, means - for me - the assumption of an identity shaped by an investigative action, as always happens in these cases.

## <5. Conclusion >

This project involves producing a dossier of sequenced images that interact with each other - since about six images were generated in each AI sub-tool - and finally (since this is the first/main objective) confront each other with the chosen image of I.H. Finley and J.Goto. How do algorithms detect semantic scopes adapted to a given iconography, how are they loaded with interpretative drifts and how do they emerge in my decisions and narrative interventions subsumed in the prompts? Not only are the aesthetic tendencies implicit in the different AI platforms used questioned, but also my determinations and affinities with it when reading Finley's and Goto's works: "Who is in control now?" Once again, questions of a concomitant disciplinary nature arise that appear essential for questioning the very nature of the research processes in this "AI visual laboratory". This visual essay with AI tools is ongoing.

## <6. References & Acknowledgements>

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